2011-2012 U.S. Army War College Key Strategic Issues List (KSIL)

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Update: The PDF of the KSIL is now **available**.

Foreword

The Key Strategic Issues List (KSIL) is published annually for the purpose of making students and other researchers aware of strategic topics that are, or should be, of special importance to the Department of Defense and the U.S. Army. The list is a compilation of input from the faculty at the U.S. Army War College, as well as from civilian and military experts across the field of defense studies. The topics reflect ongoing as well as anticipated strategic concerns, each of which is revised as the changing security environment warrants. This year has seen immense political and social changes sweep across North Africa and the Middle East. It has also seen important strategic and tactical successes in the war against al Qaeda. In addition, the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have been assessed, and U.S. and Coalition forces continue to build upon past successes. Political, social, and economic developments in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Western Hemisphere have altered the global landscape as well.

The KSIL is supplemented by a more expansive "live" research topic online database which is updated as necessary to reflect specific strategic issues or concerns for the major U.S. commands. Researchers are encouraged to contact any of the faculty members of the Strategic Studies Institute listed herein for further information regarding current or potential topics.

Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr.
Director
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Functional Strategic Issues

POC: Dr. Dallas Owens

I. Overseas Contingency Operations

1. Assess efforts to respond to evolving challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan.
2. Evaluate methods for countering ideological, political, and material support for

terrorism through domestic and foreign means including building partner capacity.
3. Assess measures for defining progress in counterinsurgency operations.
4. Determine how U.S. land power can best be focused to conduct counterinsurgency operations.
5. Assess methods for training international security forces (ministries, military, paramilitary, and police).
6. Evaluate methods to integrate political, economic, informational, and military tools in counterinsurgency operations.
7. Assess efforts to employ local militias in counterinsurgency operations.
8. Assess the utility of using U.S. land power to conduct complex contingencies and stability operations.
9. Analyze issues related to genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass atrocities, Protection of Civilians (PoC), and the Responsibility to Protect (RtP).
10. Assess options for building intelligence networks which do not compromise the neutrality of nonstate actors such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).
11. Assess methods to exert influence, align objectives, and harmonize activities in a Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational (JIIM) cross-boundary organizational environment.

II. Homeland Security/Homeland Defense/Civil Support

1. Assess current measures for countering and responding to chemical, biological, nuclear, radiological, and high-explosive threats.
2. Examine the strategic implications of missile defense as a component of homeland defense.
3. Evaluate current measures for identifying and protecting DoD and/or non-DoD critical infrastructure.
4. How can we establish domestic and international intelligence and other information sharing mechanisms among homeland defense, homeland security, and civil support entities?
5. Assess measures for integrating private sector and USG planning for and responses to public health emergencies.
6. Assess the need for distinguishing between crimes and acts of war for certain activities in cyberspace; determine to what extent existing treaties and laws govern cyberspace.
7. What steps should be taken to enhance domestic security cooperative efforts between the U.S., Central America, and South America?
8. Characterize the Strategic Communication campaigns that should accompany preparations for and responses to disaster.
9. Identify the trip wires that move an event from declared disaster to catastrophic incident. Are our responses in this upper tier of destruction the same?
10. As the Homeland Security Enterprise is focused across a continuum of prevent, protect, respond, and recover, the civil-military partnership seems more focused on actions to be taken after a disaster. What should the role of the military be in

preparing for natural and manmade disasters?

11. Our National Plans are constructed to support state preparedness and response mechanisms. FEMA's Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCC's) may represent a viable civil component of means to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a multi-state catastrophe. What should characterize the military component in support of such an entity?

III. Military Change

1. Assess ongoing efforts to respond to the changing character of war as reflected in such concepts as unrestricted warfare, evolution of insurgencies, and cyber warfare.
2. Evaluate the IED as a strategic weapon; today and tomorrow.
3. Evaluate current capabilities for conducting information operations and strategic communication in the global policy and practice arena.
4. Assess the strategic implications of emerging operational concepts.
5. Assess themes in the Army's Strategic Planning Guidance.
6. What force capabilities are needed for stability operations, domination in complex terrain, strategic responsiveness, the Army's Global Force Posture, and for battle command?
7. Assess logistical support measures for U.S. allies and coalition partners.
8. Evaluate efforts to transform the three Army components and the level of transformation success in current operations.
9. Assess measures of modular force performance.
10. Assess resource conflicts between operational and institutional transformation.
11. Examine whether Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) is meeting the Army needs.
12. Assess cyberspace in terms of risk and as an enabler to conduct warfare.
13. Are DoD business practices responsive enough in today's fast-changing world?
14. Examine the strategic implications of space as a theater of war.

IV. National Security Strategy/National Military Strategy

1. Assess U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) and/or U.S. National Military Strategy (NMS); how/where should the United States prioritize its efforts?
2. Assess costs and benefits of alternative grand strategies.
3. Evaluate strategic implications of irregular and traditional challenges.
4. Assess the value of deterrence and dissuasion in U.S. national strategy.
5. Evaluate proliferation and counterproliferation measures in a globalized world.
6. Evaluate measures to integrate military (hard power) and nonmilitary (hard and soft power) tools to achieve strategic objectives and avoid or resolve potential conflict.
7. Evaluate the utility of military force as an instrument of policy in the 21st century.
8. Examine the implications of U.S. missile defense for allies and potential

adversaries.
9. Evaluate the utility of strategic net and risk assessment in a multipolar system.
10. Assess potential impact of global climate change on U.S. national security.
11. Assess how military power might complement a "smart power" approach to national security.
12. Evaluate potential changes to the U.S. Constitution to reflect the 21st century security environment and the changed nature of armed conflict.
13. Evaluate ways to improve the effectiveness of military advice to national policymakers.
14. Evaluate ways to more effectively integrate military and nonmilitary planning into national strategy.

V. Landpower Employment

1. Evaluate current responses to irregular challenges.
2. Evaluate the requirements for military operations in complex terrain.
3. Assess the nature and importance of information superiority in military operations.
4. Assess evolving landpower roles in stability operations, security force assistance, reconstruction, and humanitarian operations.
5. Assess measures for improving joint, combined, interagency, NGO, and IGO cooperation in humanitarian and counterinsurgency operations.
6. Evaluate the effectiveness of U.S. landpower in foreign policy execution by combatant commanders and country teams.
7. Assess the impact of international law on American military operations.
8. Evaluate decision-making models and assess their relevance to various landpower employment environments.
9. Evaluate ethical implications associated with landpower employment in stability, security force assistance, and counterinsurgency operations.

VI. Landpower Generation and Sustainment

1. Assess the impact of legal constraints on military and interagency mobilization.
2. Evaluate measures to overcome anti-access and area-denial strategies.
3. Evaluate measures for operating in areas with primitive and austere infrastructures.
4. Evaluate the tradeoffs of power projection, prepositioning, and forward stationing.
5. Evaluate the impact of the expanding or decreasing roles of contractors and other civilians in defense operations.
6. Assess measures to sustaining a modular, capabilities-based Army.
7. Assess measures to establish a single Army logistics enterprise.
8. Assess command and control, logistics, and sustainment structure gaps for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in support of stability operations.
9. Assess inter and intratheater mobility requirements for the U.S. military.

VII. Leadership, Personnel Management, and Culture

1. Evaluate retention and readiness measures of active and reserve forces.
2. Assess measures to develop Soldiers and leaders for future Missions.
3. Define and assess the continuum of service.
4. Assess the apparent gap between civilian and military cultures and its effect on interagency interaction and purpose.
5. Assess the relationship between the U.S. military and American society:
    1. Demographics: who is in it, and who fights?
    2. Civilian control over the military in the 21st century.
    3. Sustaining public support.
6. Assess efforts to identify, manage, and sustain the Army's intellectual and technological talent.
7. Assess the status of the Army as a profession.
8. Evaluate how the Army develops and responds to "lessons learned."
9. Assess how differences in service cultures detract from or enhance Joint synergy.
10. Evaluate measures for maintaining a culture of innovation.
11. Assess the implications of adopting commercial best business practices for the military.
12. Assess measures to manage nondeployable Soldiers.
13. Evaluate the strategic purpose and effectiveness of the Individual Ready Reserve.
14. Examine the pre-commissioning program's effectiveness for meeting the needs of the Army.
15. Analyze the impact of changing military service requirements on families.
16. Examine the impact of military service on the perspectives of political and business leaders concerning defense policy.
17. Assess implications of interagency integration on professional military education, career progression, and other human resource management practices.
18. Examine the utilization of foreign area officers in Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) and Defense Acquisition Organization (DAO) positions within the Senior Defense Official (SDO) concept.
19. Assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities that military leaders require in complex contingencies and/or stability operations.
20. Examine ways to optimize cooperation among international, host nation, government, and nongovernment actors.

Regional Strategic Issues

POC: Dr. Steven Metz

I. Evolving Regional Security Matters in Africa

1. The evolving role and organization of AFRICOM, and its receptivity within Africa.

2. Africa and the war on terrorism.
3. Lessons learned from Africa's insurgencies and implications for Africa's future conflicts.
4. Implications of HIV/AIDS on the ground forces of African partners.
5. Strategic implications of Chinese, Iranian, Indian, and Brazilian activity in Africa.
6. Analysis of regional African infrastructure and its impact on how African nations provide for their own security (e.g., the Zambezi River Valley or the Great Lakes nations or the Trans-Sahel).
7. U.S. strategy toward the Trans-Sahel.
8. U.S. strategy toward the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its impact on its neighbors.
9. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea subregion — threats, challenges, and solutions.
10. U.S. strategy toward the West Indian Ocean nations (Comoros, Mauritius) and southeast African coast nations.
11. Nexus of security and development in Africa — why they go hand-in-hand.
12. U.S. military roles in human security issues in Africa.
13. The impacts and risks of mass migrations and refugee flows in Africa.
14. The role of the African Union in African peacekeeping operations.
15. Army international activities programs in Africa.
16. Professional development of African militaries.
17. Developing partnerships with Africa's powers: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Africa.
18. Transnational crime and security in Africa, including the effects of narco-trafficking on stability in West Africa.
19. The U.S. role in the Niger Delta conflict.
20. Climate change and conflict in Africa.

II. Evolving Regional Security Matters in the Middle East and the Islamic World

1. Assess political upheaval in Middle East following the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions.
2. Iranian regional assertiveness and its implications for Middle East security.
3. U.S.-Iraqi security relations and cooperation following a withdrawal of U.S. combat units from Iraq.
4. U.S. interests with respect to a stable, sovereign Iraq.
5. Military and security issues of the Arabian Peninsula including Saudi Arabia and Yemen.
6. Changing the U.S. military presence in the Persian/Arabian Gulf.
7. Security issues created by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
8. U.S. strategy toward Lebanon.
9. U.S. strategy toward Libya.
10. U.S. strategy toward Syria.

11. U.S. strategy toward Iran.
12. Regional and global implications of the Iranian nuclear program and ballistic missile program.
13. The impact of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) on U.S. national security.
14. Strategic implications of a changing Egypt.
15. The future of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the smaller Gulf monarchies in Middle Eastern security.
16. Strategic implications of fully or partially democratic, but anti-U.S. governments, mass movements, and political parties, in the Middle East.
17. Strategic implications of increasing Chinese interests in Middle East oil, arms sales, and economic aid to the Middle East.
18. Future role of external powers and security organizations in the Middle East.
19. Emerging and evolving military relationships among Middle Eastern states including counterterrorism relationships.
20. Strategies that regional states have for dealing with the United States and its allies in the Middle East.
21. Regional security strategies in the Middle East including ways in which the United States can most effectively cooperate with regional allies.
22. The nature of politically-oriented Islamic militancy, salafi jihadism, and their implications for U.S. and regional security.
23. Efforts to contain and moderate violent ethnic and sectarian conflicts throughout the Middle East.
24. Dangers of "spillover" problems from Iraq, and the activities of regional states within Iraq.
25. The danger of the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) of all kinds throughout the region and the potential danger of regional conflicts in which WMD are employed.
26. Regional implications of efforts to improve and modernize the conventional militaries of major regional powers including Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia.
27. Challenges of political reform (including fair treatment of all religious sects and ethnic groups) and the ways in which such reform may enhance domestic and regional security.

III. Evolving Regional Security Matters in the Asia-Pacific

1. Balancing U.S. security interests in China and Taiwan.
2. Assess U.S.-China mil-mil relations.
3. Assess the Obama Administration's "back to Asia" efforts.
4. Implications of China's growing economic and military power in the region.
5. China's regional and global grand strategy.
6. China's military transformation.
7. The strategic implications of China's growing space capabilities.
8. Chinese-North Korean relations.
9. Strategic response to North Korea's intentions and capabilities.
10. Evolving Republic of Korea-U.S. security relations.

11. Examine North Korea's leadership change and the future of North Korea.
12. The role of the U.S. military on the Korean Peninsula.
13. Politics of history and memory in South-North Korean relations.
14. The future of the Japan-U.S. security relationship.
15. Japan's relationships with Asian nations.
16. Security concerns in Southeast Asia and implications for the United States.
17. Future of ASEAN and U.S. strategic posture in the region.
18. Future of the U.S. alliance with Australia and New Zealand.
19. Sources and dimensions of anti-Americanism in Asia: policy implications.
20. Role of nationalism in Asia and implications for U.S. policy.
21. Role of ideology in Asia and implications for U.S. policy.
22. Russia's interests, policy, and actions in Asia.
23. Transformation of U.S. forward deployment in Asia.
24. Future U.S. energy security strategy for Asia and the Pacific.
25. Organized crime and security in South Asia.
26. India as a rising Asian power and the expansion of its overall capabilities and interests.
27. Strategic implications of U.S.-Vietnam security relations.
28. Evolving U.S.-Thailand security relations.
29. Contending sea powers in East Asia.
30. Strategic implications of U.S. economic downturn and global financial crisis on U.S.-Asian relations.

IV. Evolving Regional Security Matters in Europe

1. U.S. Army roles in future Balkan security.
2. A roadmap for future security in the Balkans.
3. The revival of the Russian military.
4. Prospects for Russo-American security and/or defense cooperation.
5. Russia's future relationships with Europe and the United States.
6. Energy security in Europe.
7. Democratization and instability in Ukraine, Georgia, and Belarus.
8. Impact of growing Muslim populations on European security policy.
9. Strategic implications of reconfiguring the U.S. military presence in Europe.
10. Implications of a changing NATO.
11. U.S. leadership in NATO: Does/should the U.S. Army still play a role?
12. NATO and EU defense capabilities: new or just repackaging the old?
13. EU civil-military cell: a useful model for joint/interagency operations?
14. Is the U.S.-Europe military capabilities gap still growing; are U.S. technology transfer rules helping or hindering?
15. Implications of OIF for European cooperation in the war on terrorism.
16. EU expansion while excluding Turkey from membership.
17. Strategic implications of drawing down U.S. forces in Europe.
18. Will ISAF break NATO?
19. Should the United States encourage handover of OEF to NATO and allow CENTCOM to focus on OIF?

20. EUCOM's future role with the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre-Narcotics (MOAC-N) located in Lisbon, Portugal (7 nation regional center).
21. Discuss coordination across the COCOM seams: The unique role that Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) plays in the EUCOM AOR to combat cross-Atlantic illicit narcotics trafficking.
22. How should the United States leverage European engagement with China?
23. Mediterranean strategic implications in light of the creation of AFRICOM.

V. Evolving Regional Security Matters in South Asia

1. Balancing U.S. security interests between India and Pakistan.
2. Role of India in world events and U.S.-Indian military-strategic relations.
3. Maintaining stability and security in Afghanistan.
4. Long-term implications of maintaining the OIF coalition.
5. The evolving American security relationship with Pakistan.
6. The global response to state failure or internal conflict in South Asia.
7. Organized crime and security in South Asia.
8. The risks, benefits, and implications of poppy eradication in Afghanistan.
9. Iran: A potential partner in stemming illegal Afghan drug flow. Should the coalition seek to engage Iran in mutually beneficial border control to stem the flow of illicit narcotics?
10. Strategic implications of China-India cooperation and conflict.

VI. Evolving Regional Security Matters in Central Asia

1. Growing U.S. security interests in the Caucasus and Central Asia.
2. Russian-China-U.S. competition in Central Asia.
3. Implications of energy development in the Caucasus and Caspian regions.
4. Synchronizing security cooperation and political reform in Central Asia.
5. The role and structure of the U.S. military presence in Central Asia.
6. Strategic implications of the evolving Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

VII. Evolving Regional Security Matters in the Western Hemisphere

1. U.S. interests in Caribbean security issues.
2. Hemispheric security forces (military and police) and new threats.
3. Improving security ties with Brazil.
4. Lessons from the Colombian insurgency.
5. Immigration and people smuggling as a security issue.
6. Alternately governed space and implications for territorial security.
7. Gangs and other transnational crime as a threat to the area.
8. Venezuela as an exporter of political instability.
9. Narco-funded terrorism networks.
10. Instability and disenfranchised indigenous and poor populations.

11. Implications of the rising threat of populism in the region; the difference between populists and the "responsible left."
12. Addressing the fundamental disconnect between the U.S. and Latin American visions of current threats to the region.
13. Long-term implications of Chinese engagement in Latin America.
14. Maintaining the viability of hemispheric security forces during a time of declining budgets.
15. Implications for U.S. security of a post-Castro Cuba.
16. Forming a North American Security Community.
17. Improving U.S.-Mexico security ties.
18. Implications of the drug war in Mexico.
19. Impact and desirability of forming sub-regional security organizations like the *Conferencia de Fuerzas Armadas Centroamericanas* (CFAC).

VIII. Other

1. Revising the boundaries of the geographic Combatant Commands.
2. Integrating regional security cooperation plans, basing, and presence policies.
3. Environmental issues as a basis for enhancing security cooperation.
4. How Interagency Combatant Commands function.
5. Analysis of a viable and relevant sub-national, national, or trans-national political actor along the framework suggested by the Analytical Cultural Framework for Strategy and Policy (ACFSP) as discussed in the May 2009 SSI Letort Paper "Cultural Dimensions of Strategy and Policy" to identify that group's sense of purpose and values, the interests that derive from them, and implications for U.S. strategy and policy regarding that group.

War and Society

POC: Dr. Antulio J. Echevarria, II

I. American Society

1. Discuss ways of balancing individual civil rights and national security requirements.
2. Assess the debate over America's place in the world.
3. Examine America's changing perceptions of other nations.
4. Examine the U.S. media's role in political and social mobilization.
5. Examine American civil-military relations in wartime.
6. Examine the role of religion and faith in the American way of war.
7. Strategic implications of public perceptions of who serves, and who dies.
8. Assess how operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have affected U.S. civil-military relations.
9. Assess civilian control of the military and the requirement to provide military advice.

10. Examine possible political boundaries for general and flag officers, active and retired.

II. International Society

1. Assess the impact of the global financial crisis on the United States.
2. Assess the strategic impact of the rising powers, i.e., China, India, EU, Brazil, Russia, and others on the United States.
3. Assess the "Clash of Cultures" debate.
4. Examine the implications of anti-Americanism for U.S. foreign policy.
5. Examine centers of power in other societies and cultures.
6. Assess the role of "strategic communication" in establishing trust with our partners.